



**‘Women should be involved in the development agenda’**



## Country Director's Message



**Korto Reeves Williams**  
**Country Director**

Welcome to yet another edition of our newsletter, Cianhedeh. 'Cianhedeh' which means 'Change' in the Krahn language, is our quarterly edition that covers our quarterly activities. ActionAid sees social change and justice as important elements in their partnerships to bring sustainable development to Liberia.

In this edition are diverse articles, testimonies and stories of change as a result of different community interventions involving participants and partners focusing on Women and Girls' Rights and Youth and Urban Poverty. While ActionAid recognizes the dismal development challenges in Liberia, we are optimistic based on stories of

community agency, some captured in this newsletter, that Liberia can fully recover from the devastation caused by more than a century of bad governance, marginalization of large percentages of the population, and by the war.

To contribute to this, ActionAid Liberia has committed to engaging internal power structures and global external systems that cause Liberia's development challenges, and will promote sound political governance that will ensure transformative and sustainable development.

It is hoped that this tool will not only give information on ActionAid's work, but also provide an avenue for interaction on how best to advocate for human rights and create partnerships from the community level to the International level.

We extend our appreciation to our partners, donors and the community at large for working with ActionAid Liberia towards social change and improvement in the lives of the Liberian people.

Enjoy your reading!

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### ActionAid Core values

**Mutual Respect**

**Equity and Justice**

**Honesty and Transparency**

**Solidarity with the poor**

**Courage of conviction**

**Independence**

**Quality and Excellence**

**Proximity**

**Respect for the rights of women and Children**

# International Women's Day 2013 and Beyond



**O**n 8th of March every year, the world celebrates the International Women's Day. The significance of this day is to bring to attention the struggle of women in our societies and celebrate the social, political and economic realizations. Focus and themes for this day ranges from region to region, depending on the suppressing issues that involve the women. Despite the efforts, very little has been achieved in this, as women continue to tussle in development.

ActionAid Liberia in partnership with Medica Mondiale Liberia organized and hosted a Policy Dialogue Forum as a celebration of the International Women's Day 2013, on 12th March at Krystal Oceanview Hotel, Mamba Point. The event was attended by female university students, representatives from grassroots women and youth organizations, CSO's and NGO's working on women issues and The Media. The speakers at the event were, Korto Williams, ActionAid Country Director, Josephine George Francis, Representative of the National Legislature and Chair of the Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia, Wokie Cole, Secretary of Liberian Women Empowerment Network, Madam Joana of Medica Mondiale and Ezekiel Pajebo from Trust Africa.

Korto Williams opened the forum and extended her appreciation to all that were present. The National Theme was; **'The Direction of Women Rights in Liberia; Achievements & Challenges'**, and she further explained that the forum was about having interactive discussions and forming the basis for women empowerment and endless involvement in the development agenda of Liberia. Korto posed a challenge to the media that they should understand the agenda, do more analysis and document, to see how best they can contribute to the change.

Mr. Ezekiel Pajebo, who was the first speaker, pointed out that there is no sufficient representation of women

in power, and he gave an example of The Cabinet and the National Legislature, despite the high population of women in Liberia. Rape, early marriage, wife battery, Female Genital Mutilation and access to quality education came up as the main challenges facing women and girls in Liberia. This creates grounds to challenge the relevant institutions to address women and girls issues.

## **The Gender Agenda**

It was noted that women have always been afraid to take charge and that makes them more vulnerable. *'When women are part of the majority, then their voices will be heard.'* These were sentiments from the National Legislature representative, Madam Francis. She pointed the need for enactment of the Gender Equity Bill as the first major step that will promote zero tolerance to Violence Against Women. She talked about the 'sex for grades' that still affects the female university students. According to a recent report by ActionAid (*WOMEN AND THE CITY; Examining the gender impact of violence and urbanization, 2011*) .....**Continue to page 12**



NGOs, CSOs, Media and grassroots' organizations representatives follow proceedings during the Forum

## High Level Panel meeting on Post - 2015 agenda held in Liberia

The British prime Minister, David Cameron, was in Liberia for a critical meeting to discuss the level of achievements on the UN set Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. Among the panelists was Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the president of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang. It is feared that the deadline is getting close and yet little has been achieved, not only in Liberia, but also in other African countries. The main point of discussion was the efforts to address extreme poverty and promoting of women rights.

As part of the discussions, ActionAid Liberia in partnership with Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia organized an evening reception outside the Capital Building, Parliament, on 30th January 2013. The reception created a platform for NGOs, CSOs, grassroots organizations and individual to get briefings on proceedings of the discussions at the high level meetings.

At the reception, the chairperson of the Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia - WLCL cited that women participation in parliament would be a good course towards the global development agenda. Women still remain unrecognized and they don't benefit for reasons based on their gender. She added that the WLCL remains committed to ensure the fulfillment of women economic rights, gender equity and women



Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia Chairperson, Hon. Francis G. Josephine (in blue) with some of the invited guests at the reception

“This is a global demand and with the head of state being part of the panel, this is a good course for the women in Liberia.”

empowerment, access to social welfare services and women inheritance rights.

### Women at the center of development

ActionAid Liberia Country Director, Korto Williams mentioned Maternal Mortality as one of the major issues of concern to women in Liberia. She pointed out that women must be in a position to stand and advocate for their Economic, Social and Cultural rights. “This is a global demand and with the head of state being part of the panel, this is a good course for the women in Liberia.” she added. She pointed out that NGOs, CSOs and the grassroots organizations should continue to engage the government to have women at the center of development.

The president of the University of Liberia, who was also present at the reception mentioned of the increase in the number of female students in the University. He pointed out that Liberian women have come along way, especially with the leadership of the president, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who has always pushed forward the women agenda.

Water, sanitation and health were also mentioned as a priority issues for the women. One of the CSO



ActionAid Country Director, Korto Williams addresses the NGOs, CSOs and grassroots' organizations representatives during the reception.

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## Structural Abuse; still a constraint to development

to achieve this. The provision of economic and social services by government structures to the local citizens has been unsatisfactory. According to the 'Urban Poverty Participatory Analysis' carried out by ActionAid Liberia in September 2012, some of the constraints that came up included limited access to employment opportunities, poor governance, unequal distribu-

tion of social wealth, limited access to business networks for economic growth and limited access to adequate education

opportunities and all these have led to increase in the level of poverty.

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**T**ransforming the economic situation goes with political and social responsibility, human rights protection and community empowerment at both local and international levels. ActionAid Liberia is working with communities



A picture showing a classroom: Some areas have no proper schools

## A New Day for Discipline at Morlakwelleh Public School

*"We have noticed reduction in violence on the campus as students now report anything they perceive as a violation of their rights, ....."*



Principal of Morlakwelleh school

*"This system also gives students a clear line for reporting violence cases "*

Generally, schools in the rural areas are not managed according to the Ministry of Education's standard. Modes of punishment such as corporal and manual labor on teachers' farms for misdemeanor ranging from tardiness to poor academic performance to bullying and so forth have been widely reported across Gbarpolu where Action for Children's Rights in Education (ACRE) is being implemented. However, since the inception of ACRE things are taking a different turn. Teachers from the 10 participating ACRE are using the Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) concept in their schools' disciplinary codes. The Principal of Morlakwelleh Public School in Bokomu District, Gbarpolu County, explained to ActionAid Liberia how the project has helped his school.

"This approach is very good and most of the schools are making use of the training. In our school, we have worked with the students to set up disciplinary system where punishments given to students have been changed. It was set up in line with human rights instruments. This system also gives students a clear line for reporting violence cases. Children no longer stay home for fear of being punished at school. We have even relaxed punishment for tardiness on the part of children who walk long distances to school."

Regarding acts of violence at school, the principal said, "We have noticed reduction in violence on the campus as students now report anything they perceive as a violation of their rights, since they know that appropriate actions will be taken. We are trying to have students on the investigation team."



ActionAid Staff during the ASRP review in Montserrado Rural

## Rural communities benefit from ASRP

**A**ctionAid Liberia in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture had a Three Year Project on agriculture in Montserrado Rural. With funding from International Fund

for Agricultural Development, the Agricultural Sector Rehabilitation Project-(ASRP) has seen farmers from Todee and Careysburg Districts benefiting, in terms of self-sustainability, social and economic growth. The

farmers were involved in both Crop and Livestock keeping. ActionAid succeeded in forming 40 reflect cycles within the communities involved.

In the final term review in January 2013, officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and ActionAid were able to meet with the beneficiaries, with women estimated to be 60%, though the youths were also involved in the farms. The review process involved going through level of achievements, identifying the

constraints and coming up with recommendations. Inputs (crops and livestock) distributed to the rural households are helping to improve the livelihood of the beneficiaries. The project enabled the beneficiaries realize the importance of raising high yielding crops and improved animal breed.

On the overall, the Assessment Team found that Action Aid achieved 67 percent of its targets in the midst of many challenges. *continue to page 7*



Fatumata Barry, a student

## Girls' Concern Gets a Hearing at the Local Education Office

level of engagement. PRS' safe and non-violent education environment became the basis for the Gbarma forum's engagement with the District Education Officer of that district.

Fatumata Barry, is member of the Girls' Forum in Gbarma. She explained to AAL how her forum's training experiences have sharpened their focus and emboldened them to present a statement to the district education officer. "After the trainings and coaching from AAL, we understood what it meant to have safe and non-violent education environment. In our meetings we identified all of our problems and found action points for them and then decided

to write a statement about them." Teachers insulting and sexually harassing female students and going with impunity took center stage. "Teachers are insulting and sexually harassing female students and are going free with it." According to her, they developed a position statement and presented it to the District Education Officer (DEO), since they were not getting favorable actions from the teachers and school administration.

"We developed our statement and gave it to the DEO showing all the issues and the names of teachers who abuse us and instances of those abuses.

*....Continue to page 11*

*"I feel happy but will be happier if all the cases are looked into and right actions are taken."*



One of the beneficiaries of the project writing her name

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The ASRP goal was to reduce post conflict poverty, food insecurity and to improve livelihoods of rural communities. The visits to some of the farms also gave a visual impression of the efforts and the high level of commitment of the farmers, despite some challenges.

Knowledge and skills acquired enabled the farmers to produce more than what they have produced before the ASRP intervention. The farmers also



M.O.A Officials during the community visits

exchanged their produce.

The exchange exercise of inputs among CBOs makes members to be accountable to what is given to them and encourages farmers to diversify their production.

The adult literacy sessions

created an environment for them to know how to write their names and counting.

It was recommended that implementation of outstanding activities be carried out by ActionAid beyond project period.

## Africa Watch Newspaper awards ActionAid Liberia's Country Director

**T**he Africa Watch Newspaper awarded The Outstanding Country Director of the Year Award to ActionAid Country Director, Korto Williams. During the ceremony that was held on 1st February 2013, at ActionAid Building in Monrovia, Mr. Joseph Weah, the Managing Director of Africa Watch, pointed out that the award was based on programs impact, coordination and the organizational structure among others and ActionAid has been able to substantiate this, through the community social change and Human Rights programs.



ActionAid Liberia Country Director, Korto Williams with members of staff after the award ceremony

### Appreciation to Staff

Every end of the year, an evaluation is carried out by the Africa Watch Newspaper and members of public are involved in nominating outstanding personalities, organizations and even parliamentarians. However, Korto thanked the media for the award and

owes the award to the entire staff at ActionAid, who have been working towards achieving the overall objective of promoting social justice. She pointed out that ActionAid will continue to work for the community and increase

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The Liberian Women Empowerment Network (LIWEN) just concluded the second phase of the UNAIDS and UNICEF supported project on ‘promoting positive living of People Living with HIV and Antiretroviral Therapy Adherence in the Emergencies affected counties in Liberia.’ The second phase was carried out in River Gee and Maryland Counties. The major activities involved trainings for peer Educators, trainings for People Living with HIV and awareness campaigns. A total of 15 peer educators and 10 People living with HIV were trained, of which 10 persons, from the two groups were used as resource persons during awareness creation activities in the areas.

LIWEN, being the only network of women and adolescent girls living with HIV and AIDS in Liberia, carried out the activities with the full involvement of three support groups which were; Bahn Health Center, River Gee Health Center and J.J. Dosen Memorial Hospital.

Meanwhile, ActionAid Liberia came in to provide financial support to forty support groups, in and around the fifteen political subdivisions of Liberia, to strengthen the groups’ commitment in their activities, meetings and forums. In the South East, during the execution of the emergencies project, the total of eight support groups benefited from the ActionAid financial Aid. Those that benefited were Ganta United Methodist Hospital, Saniguelle, Saclepea Comprehensive Health Center, Bahn Health Center, Jackson F. Doe Memorial Hospital, Martha Tubman memorial Hospital, River Gee Health Center and J.J. Dosen Memorial Hospital Support groups.

LIWEN also had radio talk shows in the two counties, mainly to discuss and share facts surrounding HIV/AIDS prevention. This created an opportunity for the community members to call in, ask questions and participate in



LIWEN Staff on Radio Talk Show at River Gee County

## LIWEN reaches out to River Gee and Maryland Counties



A cross-section of LIWEN Outreach Team in Maryland County

discussions and the talk show in River Gee recorded more than 15 callers while Maryland had 8 callers.

Two women in Nimba came out and shared their story. They had been taking country herb for medication, but after listening and getting the right information through the radio talk shows, they decided to stop. Now they are taking proper medication and they are getting better, thanks to LIWEN.

Getting the people to attend the trainings and the awareness activities was a challenge due to the high level of stigma in the areas, but with the help of resource people within the support groups, LIWEN was able to achieve this. It was also noted that some of the people don’t take medication regularly, as prescribed. However, after the trainings and awareness, the participants vowed to follow medication prescription and also promised to reach out to the larger community and share information learnt.

Being the first HIV/AIDS project since the hospitals started in the areas, the participants and staff of the hospitals appreciated pointed out that regular trainings and awareness programs will have more people benefiting.

Liberian Women Empowerment Network

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representative mentioned the need for management of the resources, putting development oriented policies in place e.g. on land issues, agricultural policies, transparency and access to information among others.

Miss Betty, who was also a panelist from Kenya, mentioned that parliamentary representatives should also be a part of this process as this will create a high level of scrutiny when it comes to women development agendas.

### **Business people have a role to play**

For the MDG number 3 - Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women, the business people present mentioned some roles they, in partnership with the government, can play, which include creating a favorable environment for infrastructure development, dispute resolution and economic support for women in small scale businesses.

It is hoped that whatever comes out of this process will contribute to economic growth of Liberia and other African countries. Miss Betty also mentioned that linking with other women parliamentarians, from other parliaments, would also create a sense of solidarity.



*Representatives from CSO's, NGO's, Media and grassroots organizations follow proceedings during the reception, outside Capital Building.*



*ActionAid Liberia Staff sharing reports and IEC Materials after the event*

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These have brought about iniquities, such as prostitution, crime, drug addiction, early marriages, STDs and high illiteracy level, making the communities inhabitable.

Involvement of youth and women is important in decision making, policy formulation and development processes.

The exclusion of women in the development agenda has obstructed their efforts towards realizing their life ambitions and that of the society as a whole and therefore

they still remain vulnerable.

The youth, on the other hand forms a bigger percentage of the country's population, approximately 60%, and therefore involvement of the two classes of people in development processes is highly projected to create positive change, reduce the level of poverty and hence respect to Economic, Cultural and Social Rights.

With proper leadership and development structures put in place by the government, then the struggle for Eco-

nomical, Cultural and Economic Rights will be minimal.

In as much as the impact of the civil war that brought down the level of development, remains an excuse for slow progress in the development, the Govern-

ment has to do more. By rehabilitating the basic structures and providing basic services, other Non-governmental actors and even the private sector may come in to work hand in hand for the progress of the country.



*Children at Varney Town School, Rural Montserrado*

## The status of Women on Sexual Gender Based Violence

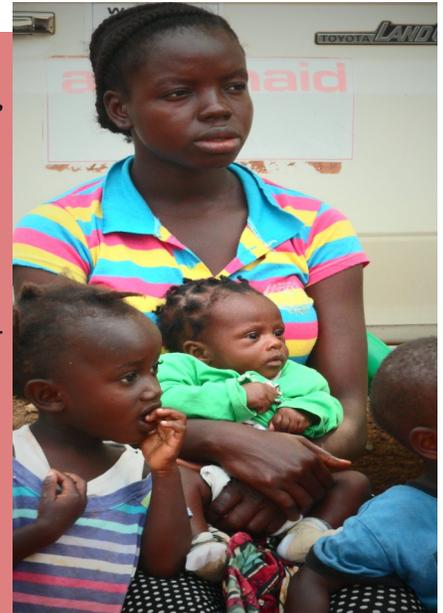
Structures have been put in place by different stakeholders, to advocate for protection of women against SGBV (Sexual Gender Based Violence), but the efforts still remain less fruitful. In a meeting held at ActionAid Liberia, on Tuesday 8th January 2013, by the women study group, it was noted that cases of abuse of women and girls is still at an alarming rate, despite the efforts to combat. Out of the many abuse cases, only a few are reported and or published in the daily newspapers. However, sections

of Administration, governmental and non – governmental, have become unenthusiastic in this noble process, hence continuous misery of the Women in Liberia. The Media has played a part in reporting such incidences, but still there is desperate call for following up on investigations with the concerned authorities to make sure there is transparency and justice, regardless of economic, social or political class.

The need for dialogue with Liberia National Police, Ministry of Gender, and The Judiciary has emerged, with

the involvement of the community through creation and or strengthening of ‘hot points’ for the journalists to report. This will help in documentation and gathering facts and case studies from different sources to make effective formal engagements with the concerned key players. ActionAid Liberia still pushes on top the agenda of women protection.

To achieve this, there is great need to engage the Ministry of Gender on network formation and strengthening, to create a basis for reporting, monitoring and evaluating SGBV and make it a priority focus for economic, social and cultural development in Liberia.



*A lady with her children in one of the community engagement meetings of ActionAid*

## Anti - Violence Against Women Campaign Video Produced

ActionAid with support from the UN VAW Trust fund has produced an Anti-violence against women campaign video on HIV, rape, the inheritance laws, the referral pathway, UN Security Council 1325 and women participation in decision making. It is an educational video depicting actions that constitute violence against women. The movie is being shown in video clubs in Grand Gedeh and River Gee county and has helped improve the status of women in the region.

The video was produced in collaboration with the Liberia Movie Union, and the local Cultural Troup-Gedeh Ballet Rooster in Grand Gedeh county.

**(Pictures from top)**

*A scene of the video: An alleged rapist being charged and sent to court by the police.*

*Another scene of the video: A lady after being selected to serve at the elders council is assuring women of full protection and participation in community issues.*

*A scene of the video with the Gedeh Rooster Cultural Troup.*





*A group of girls walking home from school.*

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The DEO was happy and assured us of appropriate actions to be taken. He also encouraged us to continue reporting cases of violence and abuse at school.

Recent report from girls shows that the principal of the school Fatu is attending is going through investigation.

According to Fatu, she feels happy but will be happier if all the cases are looked into and right actions are taken.

***“Teachers are insulting and sexually harassing female students and are going free with it.”***

### ***Child Focused Story***



*Winnie Pajibo, 13 Years*

Winnie Pajibo aged 13, is a 7th grade student of the Petrokon Elementary School and one of the proud beneficiaries of ActionAid’s work in her community, Petrokon, in Grand Gedeh. She participated in most of the trainings conducted by AAL during the

course of the project. The project, of which its objective, according to her, was to protect girls (especially school going girls) against rape, HIV & Aids and other abuses, prepared her and other girls in Petrokon to guard against violence and abuses that might negatively impact their learning in school. During an interview, she said, *“Our community is experiencing an influx of men from diverse background in search of employment with the Putu Iron Ore Mining Company; there is a need to protect us from some of those evil minded individuals who come to exploit us”.*

Winnie, who has been a member of the drama team set up by AAL’s Violence Against Girls Education (VAGE) project staff, has been dramatizing along with her colleagues the impact of rape and HIV & AIDs to her peers and other

groups in Petrokon. *“Thank God for the AAL projects that have provided me and other school going girls with the knowledge on the dangers of being infected with HIV & AIDs and rape”* she added.

Meanwhile, Winnie alluded that the incidences of rape and other related violence and abuses against girls have reduced in her community as the direct result of ActionAid’s work which according to her is a prime factor responsible for her progress in school.

She finally admonished all of her friends especially those who are currently in school to be mindful of those evil minded men who come in the community with the intention of seeking employment with the company, and remain focused on their studies.

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there is great need for University authorities, Local and National governments to be held accountable to prevent violence against women and guarantee the safety of female students.

Involvement of Rural women in fostering women agenda shouldn't be overlooked; otherwise the struggle would be in vain. Francis pointed out that women should not only know their rights, but also exercise them. This is achievable, especially having the president, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, playing a key role in advancement of gender equity and advancement of women in Liberia.

However, there has been some success, as Francis pointed out. There have been more girls enrolled for primary education, than before and more women are earning more income than ever before. One of the participants mentioned the need for the educated women to break the barriers and embrace the less educated, to be able to work together towards women development.



Gender Based Violence is one of the major causes of injury and death to women worldwide, causing more deaths and disability among women. Madam Joana of Medica Mondiale, expressed the need to also look at the implications involved in Violence Against Women. The survivors of violence need psychosocial support and

more so, safety. She cited the need to build safe houses for safety assurance.

Women living with HIV/AIDS were also not left out in the interactive discussions. Wokie Cole of LIVEN, pointed the need to have women living with HIV/AIDS in cooperated in development programs and having economic empowerment for sustainability.

### **Collective responsibility.**

The participants recommended the need for men to commit themselves to support women initiatives, establishing focal points at the grassroots for reporting VAW cases and working with established structures like college or university student unions. The women also need access to finances and entrepreneurship skills for economic growth. It was also pointed out that the women

themselves should put aside the economic, cultural and social differences and work together.

Madam Korto concluded the event by pointing out that the discussions on the 'gender agenda' should be ongoing and she welcomed ideas and partnership initiatives, with Action-Aid, that will champion the realization and protection of women and girls rights in Liberia.



*A picture showing women selling their produce in an open air market in Gbarpolu*

## **Poetry By Tete, ActionAid Liberia Women**

*Queen is what we are  
Yes, we are women!  
We know, we've lived in this skin for years  
We bathed in this atmosphere  
We have been stronger than most  
When the world expected us to fall and crumble, We  
rose!  
We know our essence*

*Apparently We are good for our physical features  
But underneath our structure is our inner substance  
And before men knew success, women thought them  
how  
We were build to endure pain and smile in the face of  
Agony  
Women are born in a statistical creed  
We have to literally compete for everything so forgive  
us for not being so easy*

*Strong is what we are  
We know it's what society label us as, So if We are loud it's  
because We won't settle for less  
We nag our men because we see their potential  
We scream in public if it means our opinions gets to be offi-  
cial  
We are beautiful more than eyes can see and words can  
speak  
It is not the physical, more like the inner thing*

*We raise our voices to explain things  
We express our creativity  
We ride in the wings of pride  
Bathe in fountains of intelligence  
We face walls of defeat and yet we don't gave up, Still hop-  
ing to conquer  
And we have to deal with being a woman  
But we very are proud to be women*

## **ActionAid Liberia partners with UN- FPA**

ActionAid Liberia has entered into partnership with the United Nations Population Funds (UNFPA) to work towards strengthening national capacity for implementation of international agreements, national legislation and policies in support of gender equality and reproductive rights.

The organization seeks to support advocacy for the development of gender related laws and the formulation of policy against harmful traditional practices.

The interventions includes Supporting advocacy for the enactment of the Gender Equity (Fairness) Bill and Providing support to the Line Ministries/CSOs to work with the National Traditional Council and Ministry of Internal Affairs in develop policy for regulation of harmful traditional practices including early marriage and FGM.

This response will promote the achievement of gender equality and reproductive rights in Liberia. We will keep you updated in our next editions on the progress of this project.

### **Did you know?**

By using renewable energy sources to provide your daily energy needs we can decrease CO2 emissions with 20,000 pounds less of carbon dioxide each year, including 50 pounds of nitrogen oxide less, and 70 pounds of less sulfur dioxide omitted into our atmosphere.

Source: Solar Energy World (Environmental Facts)

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its relevance in Liberia.

She also said that change in not about money, rather it's about a change in the mind set and the overall objective is respect to human rights; regardless of the level of poverty or marginalization.

**A**CTIVISTA is the youth arm of ActionAid International in over 25 countries organized mainly to positively advocate for youth capacity building, engaging National stakeholders, and trying to breach the power between the rich and the poor.

ActionAid Liberia, understanding the complexity of youth development in Liberia and the unorganized way in which the young people advocate for matters that affect them, has begun consultations in Montserrado, Bong and Gbarpolu Counties that will eventually lead to the establishment of ACTIVISTA-LIBERIA.

The gap between the fortunate few and unprivileged majority is 15% to 85% according to the UNDP 2008 human index report on sub-Saharan countries with most of the population between the ages 18-35 years. It is often that this under privilege population are likely to remain in this state of backwardness either due to the lack of political will on the part of duty bearers to improve their lives or their inability to cohesively and unanimously articulate their views in a way that help shift the development agenda for them.

In a strong collaboration with the Federation of Liberian Youth –FLY and other youth institutions, the network will endeavor toward positively advocating on issues that affect the youth community. Youth advocacy over the years has not been organized thus creating the atmosphere for betrayal, lack of commitment, interferences by politicians and highly disarray engagement on matters that affect young people.

## The ACTIVISTA youth network coming to Liberia



*Some of the youths involved in the consultative forums for establishment of the youth network*

It is against this fact that ActionAid Liberia in collaboration with FLY intends to shift the paradigm of youth advocacy in Liberia, thereby making it overly important that National Youth Advocacy Network like the ACTIVISTA be established for well-organized and empirical base advocacy.

In the three counties, the youths welcomed the idea of establishing the network that will serve as the loudest voice for the less fortunate .

According to the findings from the consultative forums, the major challenges facing the youths in Liberia were; *Youth capacity building, empowerment, job creation, access to good and adequate educational facilities, involvement in national decision making processes, livelihood and Skills training opportunities among others.*

It is envisaged that ACTIVISTA will champion for development and improvement of the life of youths in Liberia.



*AAL Youth and Urban Poverty Program Officer, AB Towaye (far left) pose for a photo with the FLY youths after one of the consultative sessions*

## Creating space for children

The Child Sponsorship Program focus for this year is commitment towards the areas of arts, sports, counseling and leadership development by creating a space where children develop their skills, talents and potential. For a start, a plan was developed from the Local Rights Program (LRP) involving partners to have trainings for children specifically, in order to set the scene for their future development in child messaging, of which they are a key focus. It is hoped that this will improve the quality of child messages which are due in June, 2013, and to also enable children find hidden abilities and develop their special talents.

The trainings started in Gbarma town, Tarpkoima and Morlakwelleh, Gbarpolu County. Teachers and children from the sponsored communities were picked for the T.O.T training. The teachers were involved as resource persons; to support facilitators and offer guidance in arts competition. Those representing their communities for this training will in turn replicate training to other children. Educational prizes (a training kit of drawing accessories) will be provided to each representative to be used by community children (especially sponsored aware) in their towns, in preparation for child message collection exercises.

## The People4Change Program of AAI brings Inspirators to Liberia

ActionAid Liberia is having 'inspirators' for the first time, since the initiation of the project by ActionAid International, a few years ago. The People4Change inspirator placement is to help in building capacity and helping to fill the gaps identified by the AAL partner organizations, on different skills and experiences both social and professional, in order to promote social justice and development for the communities involved.

During the first week of the placement, the inspirators were taken through an induction process, whereby they were introduced to the program staff and a brief of how AAL started work in Liberia. There were presentations from staff about the different areas of work and the Key Change Promises.

Representatives from the hosting partners were present to meet one on one and interact, just to have a feel of what the organizations do, identifying the challenges and the need for the inspirators. The partners were

The drawings from each cluster would later be displayed in LRP offices and within the communities.

In other developments, three radio slots on popular local station, SMILE FM, have been handed over to children to raise awareness about child issues, which includes the importance of education, negative effects of child labor and equal rights for girls. This is part of ActionAid's work of establishing the Children's Assembly in Tchien and Konobo. Children's Circles have also been established in Karlowleh and Putu Jarwodee communities as a pilot project. Will keep you posted in our next issue on the progress of this and other activities of the Child Sponsorship Program.



*Children participate in the skills training in Gbarma*



*Some of the inspirators, with AAL Country Director (center), during a tour*

energized and optimistic that the presence of the inspirators will be a boost in terms of capacity and social development. On the other hand, the inspirators also showed their preparedness to provide the essential support. It is expected that after 9 months of placement, there will be improved Monitoring and Evaluation, Advocacy, Communication and Documentation in AAL and the partner organizations from the two Local Rights Programs, in Gbarpolu and Grand Gedeh Counties.

# ActionAid Liberia activities in Pictures

